

Message Text

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12

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-15 MCT-01

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FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5926

UNCLAS CARACAS 14313

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS, VE

SUBJ: BARCELONA DETAINEES RELEASED

REF: CARACAS 13918, 13739

1. THE PERMANENT MILITARY COURT AT MATURIN ON DEC 3 RELEASED 14 OF 15 PERSONS ARRESTED FOLLOWING THE NOV. 20 SHOOTOUT WITH SECURITY FORCES IN BARCELONA, CAPITAL OF ANZOATEGUI STATE. THE COURT DECIDED THAT THERE WAS INSUFFICIENT EVIDENT TO CONTINUE THE CASE AGAINST THE 14. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF EDGAR SANTAMARIA WHO IS RECUPERATING FROM INJURIES SUSTAINED IN THE SHOOTOUT, ONLY ONE OTHER PERSON REMAINS IN CUSTODY.

2. THOSE ARRESTED IN THE BARCELONA DISTURBANCES WERE DEFENDED BY VICENTE GONZALEZ HERRERA, WHO IS ALSO THE LAWYER FOR DEPUTY FORTUNATO HERRERA IN THE NIEHOUS KIDNAPPING CASE. IN A STATEMENT TO THE PRESS, GONZALEZ RECALLED THAT THE GOV HAD NEVER OFFICIALLY ATTRIBUTED THE SHOOTOUT TO GUERRILLA ELEMENTS. HE BLAMED THE ARRESTS IN THE CASE ON "EMOTIONAL AND BIASED MOTIVATIONS."

3. COMMENTING ON THE RELEASE OF THE PRISONERS BY THE COURT, INTERIOR MINISTER OCTAVIO LEPAGE ON DECEMBER 5 SAID SUCH WAS UNDERSTANDABLE IN A DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM WITH A SEPARATION OF POWERS. HE ADDED THAT IT WAS ABSURD TO THINK THAT THE GOV FOR ITS OWN ENDS ARTIFICIALLY PROVOKED SITUATIONS LIKE THAT WHICH OCCURRED IN BARCELONA. ASKED SPECIFICALLY IF THE

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BARCELONA INCIDENT HAD ANY CONNECTION WITH THE NIEHOUS CASE,

DEFENSE MINISTER FRANCISCO ALVAREZ TORRES STATED DECEMBER 5,
"UP TO NOW WE DO NOT HAVE ANY EVIDENCE THAT WOULD CAUSE US
TO RELATE THIS CASE WITH THAT OF NIEHOUS."

4. COMMENT: SO FAR AS WE CAN DETERMINE, THERE IS NO
CONNECTION BETWEEN THIS AND THE NIEHOUS CASE.
VAKY

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Message Attributes

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